

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ASMARA 01000 161403Z

43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 SAJ-01

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 OCL-00

OC-05 CCO-00 /066 W

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R 161245Z DEC 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3718

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 1000

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ECON ET

SUBJECT: VISIT OF SOVIET OFFICIALS TO ASMARA

1. AT 1000 DEC. 16, LEV M. ROMANOV, CONSUL OF SOVIET EMBASSY IN ADDIS, AND N. V. SERGEEVYKH, MANAGER, ASMARA BRANCH ET SO TRADING CO., LTD. (CURRENTLY RESIDENT IN ADDIS) VISITED CONGEN TO DISCUSS GENERAL ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN ERITREA. INTERVIEW WAS IN RESPONSE TO THEIR REQUEST FOR APPOINTMENT PRECEDING DAY WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO FOCUS ON COMMERCIAL INTERESTS. DURING THE CONVERSATION, HOWEVER, MR. ROMANOV EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN ERITREA, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON AMERICAN INTENTIONS CONCERNING THE RETENTION OF KAGNEW. RESPONDING THAT THE USG INTENDED TO MAINTAIN ITS FACILITY THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD PRESCRIBED IN THE 1953 AGREEMENT, THE

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PAGE 02 ASMARA 01000 161403Z

SOVIETS WERE ADVISED NOT TO TAKE EPMG STATEMENTS ON KAGNEW

PHASEOUT TOO SERIOUSLY.

2. IN ECONOMIC SPHERE, ATTENTION WAS FOCUSED ON AREAS OF TRANSPORTATION AND FINANCE, WHICH ARE THE MOST UNCERTAIN ELEMENTS IN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC EQUATION IN ERITREA. MR. SERGEEVYKH SAID THAT HIS FIRM WAS REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN ITS SERVICING GARAGE IN ASMARA ALTHOUGH THEY WERE LOSING ETH \$5,000 IN THE PROCESS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE MARKET FOR FARM MACHINERY AND VEHICLES AHD VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARED, BUT THAT THE DEMAND FOR SPARE PARTS REMAINED ACTIVE. THE SOVIETS SEEMED TO CONCUR THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WAS NOT LIKELY TO IMPROVE UNTIL SOME EFFORT WAS MADE TO FIND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION IN ERITREA.

3. THE SOVIET OFFICIALS SAID THEY WERE MAKING ONLY A BRIEF VISIT TO ASMARA, AND ALLUDED TO THE FACT THAT THEY HAD SEVERAL OTHER APPOINTMENTS IN THE CITY. THEIR GENERAL IMPRESSIONS ON THE MILITARY SITUATION SEEMED TO EXAGGERATE SOMEWHAT THE INTENSITY OF THE FIGHTING, BUT THEY SEEMED REASSURED THAT EPMG WOULD NOT LOSE ERITREA MILITARILY. IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM THE TREND OF THE DISCUSSION THAT THEIR INTERESTS WENT WELL BEYOND SIMPLY DETERMINING MARKET FOR THE PRODUCTS OF THE ETSO TRADING COMPANY.
WAUCHOPE

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